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**The Marine Corps as an Ambidextrous Mixed Martial Artist for the 2025 Fight**

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## Executive Summary

**Title:**

**Author:** Major Michael J. Martin, United States Marine Corps

**Thesis:** The Marine Corps of 2025 needs to be equally proficient in its ability to conduct major theater war (MTW) against traditional forces as well as counter the non-traditional challenges posed by irregular threats and hybrid warfare.

**Discussion:** *Project Horizon* brings together all elements of the United States Government (USG) to conduct long-term, interagency strategic planning. The purpose of the project is to develop realistic interagency strategies and identify capabilities in which the government should invest in order to prepare for the unforeseen threats and opportunities that will face the nation during the next 20 years.

Across much of the world, a new culture of global capitalism is fueling rapid economic growth, increasingly integrated markets, and dynamic technological innovation. The effects of this corporate-driven capitalism is pervasive. Foreign policy is strongly influenced by business leaders who are pulling the strings of increasingly powerful international bodies. The U.S. economy is thriving, but social safety nets have disappeared as the global business drive for profits ruthlessly discards those who cannot (or do not) contribute.

Poverty in many developing countries is exploding. An emerging Pan-Islamic movement with a message that Islam cares (while global capitalism does not) is attempting to fill the void, and has gathered partners among other religious and social movements. Leaders from the new movement are benefiting from the significant income derived from hydrocarbon energy resources and are using some of the wealth to provide for those left behind. Although the top tier of Americans have benefited tremendously from hyper-capitalism, many others have not and the global clash between profits and principles is causing leaders from all sectors a high degree of anxiety. Optimists see these diverging paths as complementary and useful. Pessimists worry that they could end up on a collision course, with profound consequences for the U.S. and the world.

I intend to conduct a thorough review of the theories behind MTW, irregular threats, and hybrid warfare. I will then apply these theories to the proposed future of *Profits and Principles* to develop a detailed scenario. In this methodology, a systematically expanded description of the operating environment that the Marine Corps organization might face in 2025 will be explored.



## PREFACE

The writer had the opportunity to experience professional, graduate level military education as a member of an outstanding group of students comprised of military officers from the Marine Corps, our sister services of the Army and Air Force, and foreign militaries represented by Australia, Canada, and Norway. We were led and taught by an exceptional civilian and military faculty.

Appreciation is extended to the following people for their support and advice on this paper: Dr. Wray Johnson of the Marine Corps School of Advanced Warfighting (SAW), for his valued mentorship, enthusiastic support, and excellent suggestions throughout this project and Lieutenant General Martin L. Brandtner, USMC (Ret.), for his early support of the idea for this paper, his sound advice, direction, and wise counsel on proceeding with this project from inception to completion. Most importantly, to my wife, Cindy, who put up with me continuing with a second straight year of graduate studies as she raised our two sons and gave birth to our first daughter.

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## **Introduction**

The future ain't what it used to be.

-Yogi Berra

Since the end of the Cold War, the Marine Corps has become the “911 force” for the world’s lone remaining superpower. The U.S. geopolitical outlook changed dramatically when Al Qaeda savagely attacked the U.S. on 11 September 2001. The U.S. was violently awakened from its post-Cold War snooze by attacks that were a stunning escalation in the level of violence from that experienced in previous terrorist attacks. Currently the U.S. finds itself at war with a transnational<sup>1</sup> terrorist movement fueled by a radical ideology of hatred, oppression, and murder.<sup>2</sup> After more than six years of war, the U.S. and its allies are immersed in a largely military campaign to stamp out the evil of transnational terrorism and its capacity for mass destruction.

Fully awake, the U.S. is now involved in the “Long War,”<sup>3</sup> a seemingly endless irregular warfare struggle against transnational terrorism. Iraq and Afghanistan are the first battles in this Long War, which may become a generational struggle with extremists that will take some time to overcome.”<sup>4</sup> In effect, we find ourselves in the same situation as our forerunners on the eve of World War II. Not unlike the Marine Corps of 1941, the Marine Corps of 2025 must be equally proficient in its ability to conduct major theater war (MTW), or “big wars” (specifically expeditionary operations), against traditional peer competitor forces as well as counter the non-traditional<sup>5</sup> challenge posed by irregular threats, or “small wars.” In order to remain the expeditionary force in readiness capable of conducting forcible entry operations, our MTW capability cannot be left on a shelf to be dusted off and employed in some future emergency.



Thus, we are currently in danger of swinging the pendulum of resources too far over to the small wars side of the scale. The Marine Corps of 2025 must be an ambidextrous mixed martial artist, equally adept at fighting a MTW or a small war, or both simultaneously. Only by achieving some form of balance, will we be able to fulfill our mandate as the “Nation’s shock troops”, that are “most ready when the Nation is least ready”<sup>6</sup>

### Situation

It's like deja-vu, all over again.  
-Yogi Berra

The Marine Corps found itself in this very same position during the years between World Wars I and II. During this period, the U.S. Marine Corps served as the nation's 911 force of choice during numerous small wars in the Caribbean and Central America. The veterans of these so-called “Banana Wars” struggled to capture the important lessons learned for future generations of Marines by publishing the *Small Wars Manual*.<sup>7</sup> Simply stated, it was a practitioner’s manual, written by Marines who had successfully fought America’s small wars, for the future practitioners of America’s small wars.

While the Marines recorded their experiences to produce a workable reference publication, Marine visionaries with one eye toward the future, and the unknown, developed a competing doctrine of amphibious warfare, which in the 1920s and 1930s represented “future war”. These Marines leveraged<sup>8</sup> the remarkable technological changes that took place in the preceding 50 years, studied previous attempts at amphibious warfare on the modern battlefield (specifically, the Galipoli Campaign from World War I) and developed a baseline doctrine in the absence of actual combat experience. On 7 December 1941, Pearl Harbor shocked the U.S. from



its isolationist interwar slumber and the amphibious Marine visionaries were soon vindicated. Unfortunately, at the same time, the costly small wars lessons learned over the past decade were put on a shelf and forgotten as the Marine Corps marched into history during the famous island hopping campaign in the Pacific Theater.

The nature of today's global economy, abetted by modern computer technology, invests minor states, non-state actors, and even individual, with offensive capabilities formerly reserved solely for nation-states. Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) and mass effects have increased the potential damage that non-state actors can inflict, while at the same time greatly facilitating their reach.<sup>9</sup> Mass violence and the resulting casualties cannot be taken lightly, nor can the increasing lethality of modern terrorism on the open societies of the West, and their dependence on highly interdependent networks of systems. Proliferation of today's highly lethal conventional weapons and WMD into the hands of non-state actors cannot be discounted, nor can the efforts by non-state actors to acquire more potent means of destruction WMD.<sup>10</sup>

Yet we cannot discount the rise of a peer competitor in the near future that will look to challenge if not dethrone our preeminent position as the world's lone superpower. "Over the next 50 years, Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC)—the BRICs economies—could become a much larger force in the world economy. By 2025 they could account for over half the size of the G-8."<sup>11</sup> As these economies grow to rival the U.S. and its G-8 partners, the competition for scarce resources will increase dramatically (particularly oil, food, and water). In 2001, Russia and China signed a "Treaty of Good Neighborly Friendship and Cooperation." Four years later, Russia and China held unprecedented joint military exercises. Both countries see the U.S. predominance in

the post-Cold War era as a threat to their power. These steps could lead to a diminished U.S. strategic presence in the Eurasian landmass from the Pacific Ocean to the Baltic Sea.<sup>12</sup>

In addition, the 2002 Chinese publication, *Unrestricted Warfare*, puts forth the Chinese view of future war as being a “war beyond limits.”<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, in 2007, China destroyed one of its own aging weather satellites with a rocket launched from a space center in Sichuan province.<sup>14</sup> This new anti-satellite weapons capability could seriously degrade our overwhelming technological superiority that is the cornerstone of how we wage war.<sup>15</sup> China and other countries could develop further capabilities to negate our current advantages in the near future.

### **Popular Myths**

You got to be careful if you don't know where you're going, because you might not get there.  
-Yogi Berra

Although there have been many studies on an “American way of war,” Russell Weigley’s *The American Way of War: A History of the U.S. Military Strategy and Policy* remains the seminal work on the subject.<sup>16</sup> Like-minded observers note that, with the exception of the American War of Independence, a distinctive form of American warfare has emerged, one characterized by a strategy of annihilation over an enemy. Although Weigley’s thesis has survived the test of time, Max Boot has posited a counter theory. In his book, *Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power*, Boot argues that America has found itself in far more small wars than big wars and therefore they are more worthy of inclusion as descriptors of an American way of war.<sup>17</sup> Another scholar has offered a powerful critique in response to both of these arguments. In a 2004 article entitled “An American Way of War or Way of Battle,” Antulio Echevarria claims that both Weigley and Boot have confused the issue and



merely offer a confused “Janus-like” view of an American way of war.<sup>18</sup> In short, these two influential authors have “confused winning campaigns or small-scale actions with winning wars.”<sup>19</sup>

Although “small wars” is billed as a relatively new and innovative term, this form of warfare is as old as man. Descriptions of what we now call small wars can be found in the Old Testament of the Bible. Since this type of warfare is not a new phenomenon, there is a rich tradition of study and analysis by many throughout history from which to draw. For instance, Prussian theorist Carl von Clausewitz described small wars (*Kleinkrieg*) in terms of the political-strategic context (*Kriegsbild*). It was defined as a general uprising (*Volskrieg*) employing the technique of guerrilla warfare (*Bandenkämpferkriegsführung*).<sup>20</sup> On the other hand, Antoine-Henri Jomini, classified wars as “intestine” (internal) or “foreign” (external). Intestine wars involve a “people in arms, making means of resistance out of everything.” They “enlist the worst passions, and become vindictive, cruel, and terrible.” Intestine wars were the result of “political or religious sectarianism.”<sup>21</sup>

In much the same way, with the difficulty faced by the U.S. in Afghanistan and Iraq, a new mythology has arisen that claims irregular warfare is somehow a “new form of warfare” that the U.S. must contend with today and in the foreseeable future. One author has summed it best: “Neither Roman legionnaires nor nineteenth century British troops would find today’s insurgencies an entirely new threat. What is new is the scale of potential violence, and the breadth of its application to a global dimension. Now super-empowered individuals can create mass effects.”<sup>22</sup> In addition, a cursory review of U.S. history reveals a long historical experience with small wars, from Francis Marion’s guerrilla campaign against the British during the

American Revolution to the various Indian wars of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to 20<sup>th</sup> century colonialism in the Philippines and Central America, to today. The U.S. has over 200 years experience in fighting small wars. This is history often forgotten or overlooked.

In truth irregular warfare is nothing more than a variation of small wars, and in most ways the same thing. Small wars are often misunderstood and have been labeled in the past in a variety of ways, including military operations other than war (MOOTW).<sup>23</sup> This is manifestly wrong. The “term ‘small wars,’ came into use during the late nineteenth century to describe any conflict against nonregular forces such as guerrillas, bandits, rebellious tribes, or insurgents of various stripes.”<sup>24</sup> Simply put, small wars are a frank description of actions that involve combat. By this definition, small wars are real war. The term itself does not necessarily refer to the scale of the war but rather to its nature: a war waged against a non-state entity and nonregular forces is a form of war very different from a war waged against a state with regular armed forces.<sup>25</sup>

Most recently, General James N. Mattis, USMC, and Frank Hoffman, have explored the term “hybrid wars.”<sup>26</sup> In their November 2005 article, “Future Warfare: The Rise of Hybrid Wars,” the authors contend that our greatest threat is the rise of an “irregular challenger.” This adversary will synthesize regular methods of war (frequently displayed by a peer competitor) with irregular threats (such as terrorism, insurgency, guerrilla war, narco-criminality, unrestricted warfare, etc.) into a new and unprecedented “Hybrid Warfare.” In addition, they add a fourth block to General Krulak’s three-block war scenario.<sup>27</sup> This fourth block is the “psychological or information operations aspects.”<sup>28</sup>

In truth, nothing of hybrid war is new or revolutionary. In fact, an observer in the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 may have postulated the rise of hybrid war as he watched the Prussian



General Helmuth von Moltke (the elder) grapple with the effects of mass army mobilizations, railroads, the telegraph, smokeless gun powder, repeating rifles, and the *francs tireurs* (French guerrillas) operating behind Prussian lines in conjunction with regular French forces of the newly created Third Republic. A similar argument could be made in WW II, where observers would have been spell bound by wireless radio advances, motorization, mechanization (and their synthesis in *blitzkrieg*), the aircraft carrier, aviation, submarines, rockets, jets, and the atomic bomb. Yet, concurrent with these advances, small commando units operated by both the Axis and Allied powers practiced irregular war behind enemy lines in numerous raids.

### **Amphibious Operations: Our Core Competency**

He hits from both sides of the plate. He's amphibious.  
-Yogi Berra

Since the birth of the Marine Corps on 10 November 1775, the Marine Corps, in conjunction with the Navy, has been the primary force projection tool for the United States. Today the Marine Corps serves as the Nation's amphibious force-in-readiness and provides a true forcible entry capability.<sup>29</sup> Codified into law, the Marine Corps' three primary areas of responsibility are:

1. The seizure or defense of advance naval bases and other land operations to support naval campaigns;
2. The development of tactics, techniques, and equipment used by amphibious landing forces; and
3. "Such other duties as the President may direct."<sup>30</sup>

Today's Navy-Marine Corps team is the only force capable of providing a forward deployed expeditionary force capable of responding to the full spectrum of contingencies, from MTW to humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR).

The threat environment where we can expect to operate is located primarily in what is termed the "arc of instability."<sup>31</sup> This territory circumnavigates the globe in a wide band that encompasses Central and Southeast Asia, the Caribbean Basin, most of Africa, and the Middle East. The arc is populated with failed nation states and bulging populations that are within 100 miles of the surrounding littoral (coastal) region, making it ideally suited for amphibious operations. In addition, the littoral region is home to 80% of the world's capital cities and over three quarters of the population.<sup>32</sup> During the past quarter century, our naval capabilities have been applied in more than 76 operations across the spectrum of crisis and conflict. As Figure 1 illustrates, all but four of these events took place within these areas.<sup>33</sup>

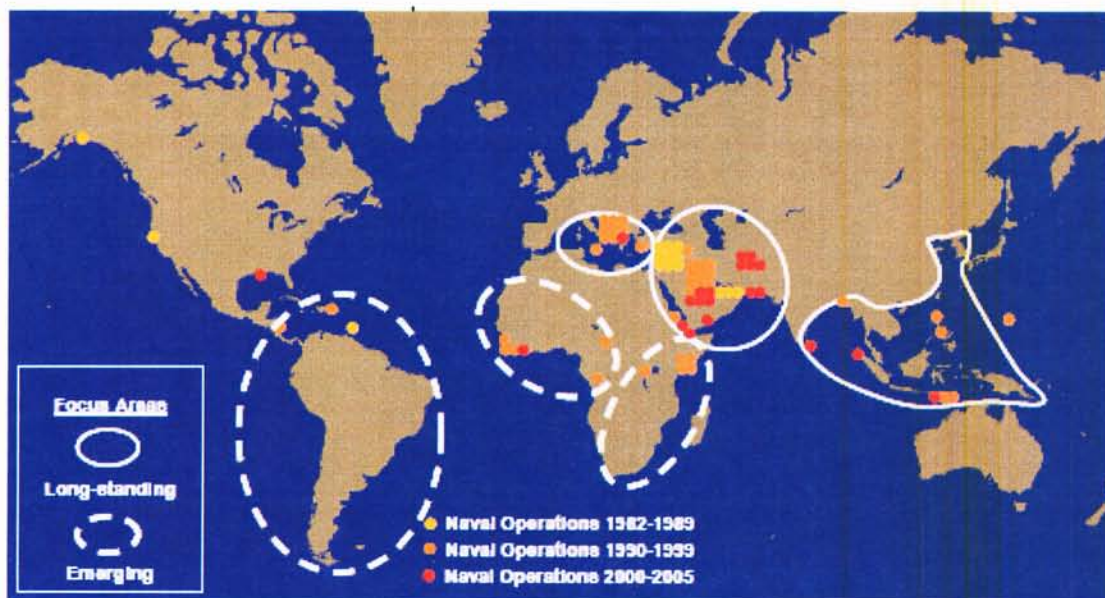


Figure 1



The demands of fighting a counterinsurgency in Iraq and the other commitments associated with the Long War has eroded the Marine Corps' capability to achieve all the objectives outlined by the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) and the Commandant in the 2006 Naval Operations Concept (NOC). We must refocus the Marine Corps to the danger and opportunity that the littorals represent just as our predecessors did in the development of amphibious warfare during the interwar years.

### **Small Wars: Our Dual Competency**

We have deep depth.  
-Yogi Berra

For nearly two centuries, the Marine Corps has developed an expertise in the conduct of small wars against elusive foes that have used asymmetrical tactics. From the Barbary Pirates in 1805 to actions against pirates in Sumatra in 1832, to guarding U.S. mail from a domestic crime wave in 1922, to the interwar years when the Marines participated in the Banana Wars, and finally to Iraq and Afghanistan today, Marines have acquitted themselves with distinction and won some hard lessons on the battlefield. As mentioned earlier, as a result of their two decade long intervention in the Caribbean and Central America, the Marine Corps published the *Small Wars Manual*. The Manual was neither a theoretical endeavor nor some doctoral candidate's random musings, nor some military student's analysis of the Banana War campaigns. Marines who had intimate knowledge and experience in these operations built the manual on direct input in an effort to avoid losing the lessons learned in these types of operations.

As our current Commandant mentions, our legacy of small wars continues to this day:

"We currently have about 26,000 Marines in Iraq, something less than about 400 in Afghanistan...[In addition, the Marine Corps] observe[s] a seven-month deployment policy with [it's] maneuver forces, a one-year policy where it relates

to the headquarters and the group, the division, the Marine Expeditionary Force headquarters that are assigned.”<sup>34</sup>

The Commandant recently proposed that the Marine Corps gradually leave Iraq and take on the challenge as the primary force in Afghanistan. Once completely out of Iraq, the Marine Corps would lead in Afghanistan, while the Army lead in Iraq.<sup>35</sup> This would shift the Marine Corps focus in Iraq of stability, security, transition, and reconstruction (SSTR) efforts, commonly referred to as nation building, to a true counterinsurgency fight in Afghanistan. A smaller force would be required in Afghanistan, which would allow longer dwell times for units in the U.S. before subsequent deployments and it would help refocus resources toward amphibious operations and major combat operations. Although Defense Secretary Robert Gates recently rejected this proposal,<sup>36</sup> it was recently announced the Marine Corps would deploy the 24<sup>th</sup> Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU) and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 7<sup>th</sup> Marines (2/7) to conduct counterinsurgency operations in southern Afghanistan (about 3,300 Marines and sailors).<sup>37</sup>

### **Posturing the Force for the Future: A Cultural and Intellectual Shift**

Even Napoleon had his Watergate.  
-Yogi Berra

Observers as far back as Thucydides have insisted that war can be perceived accurately only through the lens of history. To be useful, military theory must be grounded in the known realities of the past, not because the past repeats itself in specific ways, but rather because it reveals the nature of war, which is timeless.<sup>38</sup> Because the Marine Corps is much smaller than the Army and does not have as deep a bench of players, the Marine Corps has become an innovative service. Its core ethos, “every Marine a rifleman,” has enabled the Marines to adapt rather quickly to any mission. Recent examples that epitomize this ethos include artillery units in



Iraq acting as provisional infantry and civil affairs units, the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division Band employed as a provisional rifle platoon defending a small airstrip in Iraq, and infantry battalion combat operations centers transformed into civil military operations centers (CMOC). Virtually overnight, after the fall of Baghdad, commanders and others in the field became de facto city planners, engineers, and mayors.

Change is only possible if the culture of the organization is willing to modify its paradigms and biases. The Marine Corps is in danger of losing its culture of expeditionary warfare (which includes amphibious warfare) because of the on-going focus on counter-insurgency operations in Iraq as well as other operations in support of the Long War around the globe. A generation of Marine Officers can be measured every four years. This time period corresponds roughly with an initial commissioning contract for a junior officer. Since operations in Iraq have begun, we have had a whole generation of junior officers who have never set foot on ship and conducted amphibious operations. We begin another generation this summer when the commissioning season heats up at the annual college graduation rite of passage.<sup>39</sup>

The Marine Corps has plans to bring back a program at The Basic School called Basic School Landing Exercise (BASCOLEX). During BASCOLEX, new Marine officers spend two to three days aboard ship and conduct rudimentary ship familiarization training at sea. This training culminates with an amphibious offload at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. This is basic familiarization with the Navy, shipboard life and all the planning that goes with the landing tables. These cover only the rudimentary skills required for amphibious operations.<sup>40</sup> The only other place that officers learn about amphibious operations and how to plan them is what is taught at the Marine Corps three resident professional military education (PME) schools:

Expeditionary Warfare School (Captains); Command and Staff College (Majors); and the War College (Lieutenant Colonels). This state of affairs is unacceptable and must be corrected.

We must make a commitment to re-partner with the Navy to achieve the numerous objectives outlined in the *NOC* and the recently released *Cooperative Strategy for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Seapower* in order to preserve our amphibious character and expeditionary nature.<sup>41</sup> Currently we are not two interdependent services, but rather two services on two different paths and headed in different directions. In addition, the Marine Corps is now heavier and less expeditionary. We must recognize that the Long War will be a struggle that will be measured in decades. We therefore must realize that in order to maintain our status as the world's pre-eminent expeditionary warfighting organization, we must make a real commitment to maintaining a Marine Corps that is fully prepared to execute missions across the entire spectrum of conflict, not just small wars and counterinsurgencies.

### **Amphibious Operations: MTW and Forcible Entry**

In theory there is no difference between theory and practice. In practice there is.  
-Yogi Berra

Operational Maneuver from the Sea (OMFTS) is the joint Navy and Marine Corps capstone concept for the projection of Naval power ashore. "Like its predecessor, the approach to amphibious warfare developed at Quantico during the 1930s, *OMFTS* is a response to both danger and opportunity. The danger, summarized by the phrase 'chaos in the littorals,' consists of a world characterized by the clash of the myriad forces of national aspiration, religious intolerance, and ethnic hatred. The opportunity comes from significant enhancements in information management, battlefield mobility, and the lethality of conventional weapons."<sup>42</sup>



Our current seabasing platforms are a key component to *OMFTS* that will transform our ability to conduct amphibious operations and sustainment ashore. Sea-based forces can be adapted for a wide array of missions and operations. They can improve speed of response by acting on indications and warnings, free from diplomatic constraints, to reposition closer to an emerging crisis. The sea base can also provide a stable, safe, and fully equipped command and control capability that is already operational while en route to the scene of crisis. Sea-based forces can respond to a crisis while minimizing force protection requirements ashore. We must continue to invest in the development of relatively modest enhancements to connectors, materiel handling equipment and procedures, and command and control suites, so that we can further enhance crisis response speed, flexibility, and operational effectiveness.<sup>43</sup>

The Marine Corps recent attempt at developing the *Distributed Operations (DO)* construct constitutes an additive form of maneuver warfare. There are no “DO specific units” in the Marine Corps, nor should there be. Rather, *DO* is a concept in which small, highly capable units are spread across the limits of mutual support. Building on the Marine Corps’ quarter century commitment to maneuver warfare, *DO* will employ general purpose forces that will operate with deliberate dispersion, where necessary and tactically prudent, and execute decentralized decision making consistent with the commander’s intent to achieve an asymmetric advantage over an enemy in space and time. In consonance with the Marine Corps ethos articulated in *Warfighting*<sup>44</sup> as well as future operational concepts described in *OMFTS* and *Ship to Objective Maneuver (STOM)*<sup>45</sup>, *DO* will add capabilities that will complement vice replace current doctrine for the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF).<sup>46</sup>

### Small Wars

If you ask me anything I don't know, I'm not going to answer.

-Yogi Berra

As described earlier, the Marine Corps has made a habit of forgetting its past achievements in small wars, painfully relearning the lessons from the past, and then repackaging them with new terms such as complex irregular warfare, hybrid war, etc. The Marine Corps currently has an extensive library of doctrine to draw on for small wars. The premier document is still the *Small Wars Manual*. The recently released *Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (FM 3-24/MCWP 3-33.5), *Small-Unit Leader's Guide to Counterinsurgency* (MCIP 3.33.01), the *Marine Corps Operating Concepts for a Changing Security Environment*, and *A Tentative Manual for Countering Irregular Threats* are also fantastic examples of an organization updating doctrine.

These manuals and other documents reflect an organization that is willing to adapt and learn in order to successfully fight the prevalent form of conflict. In addition, the Marine Corps has a long and rich heritage of capturing lessons learned and assimilating them rapidly into the force and then “putting them on the shelf” and forgetting them. We must break this paradigm or continually re-grapple with a major cultural shift each time we engage in a small war.

### Organization

You better cut the pizza in four pieces because I'm not hungry enough to eat six.

-Yogi Berra

The “American Way of Battle” is characterized by a traditional strategy focused on annihilation of the enemy in which “American forces rely on mass, firepower, and overwhelming force.”<sup>47</sup> In the wake of WW II and throughout the Cold War, the United States established its



conventional force structure and doctrine on a foundation of technological superiority.<sup>48</sup> This was a deliberate effort to use technology and firepower to keep casualties low. With nearly 180,000 active duty Marines and nearly 40,000 Reservists, the Marine Corps remains the smallest of the four services.

Dr. Williamson Murray and Major General Robert Scales prophetically warned of a dangerous mismatch between the American Way of War force structure and that with which we were beginning to discover in Iraq during 2003:

While the stability mission in Iraq is manpower-intensive, the forces responsible for performing the mission form a very thin line indeed. Infantrymen bear most of the burden. Yet Army and Marine grunts make up less than four percent of America's military, a force only slightly larger than the New York City Police Department.<sup>49</sup>

The need to grow the Marine Corps is an imperative if we are to be true two-fisted fighter. In early 2007 the President authorized to the Marine Corps an active duty component end strength increase from 182,000 to 202,000 Marines.<sup>50</sup> Although this will provide much needed relief, if the Marine Corps remains in its current mission of nation building in Iraq, it will not be enough.

Marine Corps Reserve units, Individual Ready Reserve (IRR) personnel, and Individual Mobilization Augmentees (IMAs) will continue to fill critical requirements and provide critical capabilities to the active force. Since the beginning of the Long War, it has become necessary for the Marine Corps Reserve to increase the support required for operations against the backdrop of a rapidly changing world environment punctuated by asymmetrical warfare and continuing hostilities.<sup>51</sup> In the future, the Reserve force will need to be scrutinized to ensure capabilities and specialties that are low demand are converted to civilian jobs or dissolved and/or reorganized into other components (e.g., artillery units retraining as civil affairs).

### Major Acquisitions

I'm not going to buy my kids an encyclopedia. Let them walk to school like I did.  
-Yogi Berra

In order to achieve the goals set forth in the 2006 *NOC* and the 2007 *Cooperative Strategy for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Seapower*, the Marine Corps must continue to develop and field the three major acquisitions that form the mobility and fire power triad that is essential for future operations. The triad comprises, the MV-22 Osprey tiltrotor aircraft, the expeditionary fighting vehicle (EFV—formally the Advanced Amphibious Assault Vehicle), and the light-weight howitzer (LWH)<sup>52</sup>.

First, and perhaps most important in the Marine Corps vision of projecting power ashore is the MV-22 tiltrotor aircraft. It has both a vertical takeoff and landing (VTOL) and a short takeoff and landing (STOL) capability. It is designed to perform missions like a conventional helicopter with the long-range, high-speed cruise performance of a turboprop aircraft. It can transport 24 fully-equipped troops some 200 nautical miles (nm) at a speed of 250 knots (288 mi/h), exceeding the performance of the CH-46 medium-lift assault helicopters that the MV-22 will replace. An aerial refueling capability extends the performance of the aircraft to crew limit.

The EFV represents the Marine Corps primary means of tactical mobility for the Marine Rifle Squad during the conduct of amphibious operations and subsequent ground combat operations ashore. The EFV is an armored amphibious vehicle capable of seamlessly transporting Marines from Naval ships located beyond the visual horizon to inland objectives. While providing the speed and maneuvering capabilities to operate with the main battle tank on land, current obstacles to the landing force such as oceans, lakes and rivers, can be used by the EFV as



high speed avenues of approach and maneuver.<sup>53</sup> Although still being developed and currently plagued with reliability problems, the Commandant is correct in stating that the Marine Corps needs the capability now:

Right now, today, the Navy assures us that they will not go closer than 25 miles to the beach in an amphibious operation, and there is a reason for that. If you remember what happened last summer with the anti-[ship] missile systems that even a group of terrorists, Hezbollah, had, then they can reach out and touch you if they can see you. So the Navy is concerned about getting too close in, and they're simply not going to go in and drop us along a line of about 4,000 meters from the beach any longer. So we've got to get there, and this EFV gives us that kind of capability.<sup>54</sup>

Improvements in design that increase its durability and reliability will be giant step toward true STOM and the ability to bring large ground forces to bear on deep inland objectives.

The third part of the triad, the M777A2 lightweight 155-mm howitzer, is a critical fire support component of U.S. Marine Air Ground Task Forces. Already in production, the LWH is 7,000 pounds lighter than the current 155mm howitzer (M198) in the inventory and capable of being transported sling loaded under the MV-22. This reduction in weight has increased mobility while retaining the full ammunition and range capability of the M198 howitzer.<sup>55</sup>

### **Conclusion**

There are some people who if they don't already know, you can't tell 'em.  
-Yogi Berra

In the mid-1990s, then Commandant of the Marine Corps General Charles Krulak used the story of the Battle of Teutoburg Forest in 9 A.D. Germania to illustrate the chaos in the littorals that the strategic corporal would face on tomorrow's battlefield. In this famous battle, Arminius united the disparate German tribes and then ambushed and annihilated three out of nine Roman legions that were led by Publius Quinctilius Varus. When word reached Emperor

Augustus of the fate of his vaunted legions, he suffered a nervous breakdown and lamented: “Quintilius Varus, give me back my legions!”<sup>56</sup> The parable preached by the Commandant was dominant first-class imperial powers can be defeated by adaptive adversaries. Albeit technically correct, the parable is flawed in its application as evidenced by the complete pacification of Germania by 13 A.D. and the continuation of the Roman Empire for another four hundred years.

Although the Marine Corps is a highly adaptive force that has in the past moved relatively easily between amphibious deployments, MTW, and small wars, today's Long War is dangerously close to siphoning off significant resources that may be better employed keeping our core capability of amphibious operations sharp. General James Conway, the current Commandant of the Marine Corps, told the Senate Armed Service Committee in April 2008 that the focus of counterinsurgency means the Marines will “have to take extraordinary steps to retain the ability to serve as the nation’s shock troops in major combat operations.”<sup>57</sup> A continued overemphasis on counterinsurgency will only further erode our ability to wage major theater war.

The Marine Corps must find a balance that keeps both our amphibious and small war fists ready to fight any adversary in 2025 from a peer competitor such as China and Russia to some non-state actor that has the capability to wage irregular warfare and achieve disproportionate effects. “Keep the force that is needed to fight big wars, but educate our officers to recognize the nature and character of small wars so that they can adapt accordingly when confronted with an irregular foe.”<sup>58</sup> This ambidextrous balance will ensure that our Nation never exclaims, “Give me back my Corps!”



## End Notes

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<sup>1</sup> I define transnational as reaching beyond the borders of a sovereign nation across and/or into many other sovereign nations. In the context of transnational terrorism, terrorist organizations have become global networks that are increasingly diffuse and complex.

<sup>2</sup> George W. Bush, National Strategy for Combatting Terrorism, Sep. 2006. <<http://www.whitehouse.gov/nsc/nsct/2006/nsct2006.pdf>> (12 January 2007).

<sup>3</sup> Josh White and Ann Scott Tyson. "Rumsfeld Offers Strategies for Current War: Pentagon to Release 20-Year Plan Today." Washingtonpost.com, Friday, 3 Feb, 2006, pg A08. <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wpdyn/content/article/2006/02/02/AR2006020202296.html>> (14 Feb. 2007). For more information, see the Department of Defense (DOD) 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) at <http://www.defenselink.mil/qdr/> (14 Feb 2007). See also Greg Jaffe. "A General's New Plan to Battle Radical Islam." Wall Street Journal, 2 Sep. 2006, sec A., p.1.

<sup>4</sup> General James T. Conway, Commandant of the Marine Corps. "Center for a New American Security." Speech delivered at the Willard Hotel, Washington, D.C. 15 October. 2007, 1. see <http://www.marines.mil/cmc/34cmc.nsf/speeches?readform> (10 December 2007)

<sup>5</sup> My use of the words "non-traditional challenge" is the way it is currently used by most scholars and students. However, it is my view that small wars are quite "traditional," we simply choose to use them as "non-traditional" according to our narrow perspective of war.

<sup>6</sup> Second Session, 82d Congress, 1952 10 U.S.C. § 5063 (Title X, Subtitle C, Part 1, Chapter 507, Section 5063). It reads in part: "American history, recent as well as remote, has fully demonstrated the vital need for the existence of a strong force in readiness. Such a force, versatile, fast-moving and hard-hitting ...can prevent the growth of potentially large conflagrations by prompt and vigorous action during their incipient stages. The Nation's shock troops must be the most ready when the Nation is least ready ... to provide a balanced force in readiness for a naval campaign and, at the same time, a ground-and-air striking force ready to suppress or contain international disturbances short of large-scale war."

<sup>7</sup> Fleet Marine Force Reference Publication (FMFRP) 12-15, Small Wars Manual, No author, D.C.: Government Printing Office, Republished 22 December 1990.

<sup>8</sup> In joint operations, *leverage* is a relative advantage in combat power and/or other circumstances against an adversary across one or more domains (air, land, sea, and space) and/or the information environment sufficient to exploit that advantage. See U.S. Joint Forces Command, Major Combat Operations Joint Operating Concept Version 2.0, US Joint Forces Command/J-9 Suffolk VA, Dec 2006, p. IV-26 and GL-16.

<sup>9</sup> Frank G. Hoffman, "Small Wars Revisted: The United States and Nontraditional

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Wars,” The Journal of Scientific Studies, Vol. 28, No. 6, Dec 2005: 925.

<sup>10</sup> Frank G. Hoffman, “Small Wars Revisted”: 926.

<sup>11</sup> The Group of Eight (G-8), also known as the Group of Seven and Russia, is an international forum for the governments of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Together, these countries represent about 65% of the world economy. See: Dominic Wilson and Roopa Purushothaman, “DreamingWith BRICs: The Path to 2050,” Global Economics Paper No: 99, Goldman Sachs Global Economics Website, 1 October 2003, <<http://www.gs.com/insight/research/reports/99.pdf>> (11 December 2007).

<sup>12</sup> For more information see Ariel Cohen and John J. Tkacik, Jr., “Sino-Russian Military Maneuvers: A Threat to U.S. Interests in Eurasia,” 30 September 2005 <http://www.heritage.org/Research/RussiaandEurasia/bg1883.cfm> (11 December 2007).

<sup>13</sup> Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, Unrestricted Warfare: China’s Master Plan to Destroy America (Pan American, 2002).

<sup>14</sup> Kevin Whitelaw, “China Aims High: Beijing blast sets off debate about how to protect U.S. satellites,” U.S. News and World Report Vol 143, No 21 (2007) 42.

<sup>15</sup> Bill Gertz, “U.S. Satellites Dodge Chinese Missile Debris,” The Washington Times, 11 January 2008. <http://www.washingtontimes.com/article/20080111/NATION/444629685/1001> (27 February 2008).

<sup>16</sup> See Russel F. Weigley, The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy (Bloomington: Indiana Univ. Press, 1973), p. xxii

<sup>17</sup> See Max Boot. Savage Wars of Peace: Small Wars and the Rise of American Power (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2002).

<sup>18</sup> Antulio J. Echevarria II. “An American Way of War or Way of Battle.” *Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College*, Nov 2005. <<http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pubs/display.cfm?pubID=662>> (21 October 2007).

<sup>19</sup> Echevarria II., p 2.

<sup>20</sup> Wray R. Johnson PowerPoint presentation, Marine Corps Command and Staff College (CSC), AY 2006/2007.

<sup>21</sup> Johnson PowerPoint presentation, Marine Corps CSC, AY 2006/2007.



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<sup>22</sup> Hoffman, "Small Wars Revisted."

<sup>23</sup> Other terms used to describe small wars are: irregular warfare, insurgency, counterinsurgency (COIN), foreign internal defense (FID), internal defense and development (IDD), guerrilla warfare, terrorism, Fourth Generation Warfare (4GW), etc. The list is virtually endless as new terminology proliferates daily and the terms are often mistakenly interchanged.

<sup>24</sup> James S. Corum and Wray R. Johnson, Airpower in Small Wars: Fighting Insurgents and Terrorists (Lawrence, K.S.: University Press of Kansas, 2003), 6.

<sup>25</sup> Corum and Johnson, 7.

<sup>26</sup> Mattis and Hoffman use the term "hybrid wars" as if it is a new term and are often accorded as the originators of the term. However, you can find reference to hybrid war in Ralph Peters' writings in the 1990s and as far back as the 1970s and earlier.

<sup>27</sup> For more information, see Charles C. Krulak, "The Strategic Corporal: Leadership in the Three Block War," *Marines*, Marine Corps Association, Jan 1999. In essence, General Krulak posits that, in conflicts of the future, Marines on a patrol will be handing out supplies and humanitarian assistance on the first block, enforcing peace between two or more factions on the second block, and on the third block find themselves in a knock down, conventional, high intensity fight in an urban area.

<sup>28</sup> James N. Mattis and Frank G. Hoffman, Future Warfare: The Rise of Hybrid Wars," Proceedings, United States Naval Institute Vol. 131, Iss. 11, p19. <<http://www.proquest.com>> (6 August 2007)

<sup>29</sup> The current (June 2007) approved definition that the Department of Defense (DOD) uses for forcible entry is: Seizing and holding of a military lodgment in the face of armed opposition. The Marine Corps has a pending request to modify this definition to read as follows: A joint military operation, conducted with the expectation of armed opposition, which gains entry into the territory of an adversary in order to achieve a coup de main or enable the conduct of follow-on operations.

<sup>30</sup> Outlined in 10 U.S.C. § 5063, as introduced in the National Security Act of 1947. U.S. Congress, 10 USC, Chapter 507, Composition of the Department of the Navy, 1947 (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 2 January 2006), 10 U.S.C. § 5063 <<http://uscode.house.gov/download/pls/10C507.txt>> (12 April 2008).

<sup>31</sup> The arc of instability is a massive swath of global territory that runs from the Caribbean Basin, through Africa, to South and Central Asia, across North Korea, and finally through the Pacific. The term has been used to describe countries along this arc which are usually failed states or states that are left far behind the rest of the world by the burgeoning global economy.



Such countries are generally unable to deal with the transnational and internal security challenges that their weakness encourages, thus presenting additional security challenges to their stronger neighbors and the United States.

<sup>32</sup> Marine Corps Operating Concepts for a Changing Security Environment (Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Quantico, VA, June 2007), 86.

<sup>33</sup> Michael G. Mullen and General Michael W. Hagee, Naval Operating Concepts 2006, 8 (text and figure). <[www.mcwl.usmc.mil/file\\_download.cfm?filesource=c:%5CMCWL\\_Files%5CC\\_P%5CNOC%20FINAL%2014%20Sep.pdf](http://www.mcwl.usmc.mil/file_download.cfm?filesource=c:%5CMCWL_Files%5CC_P%5CNOC%20FINAL%2014%20Sep.pdf)> (5 December 2007).

<sup>34</sup> Conway, "Center for a New American Security," 3.

<sup>35</sup> Ann Scott Tyson, "Marine Corps Moves to Take Lead Role in Afghanistan: Officials Anticipating Branch's Withdrawal From Iraq's Anbar Province, Want Command of Effort." Washington Post, 11 October 2007: A11.

<sup>36</sup> Associated Press "Proposal to shift Marines to Afghanistan nixed: Corps commandant says Gates rejects plan to move forces from Iraq." 5 December 2007. <<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/22120760/>> (11 December 2007)

<sup>37</sup> Associated Press story "Marines Deploy in Southern Afghanistan." 18 March 2008. <<http://www.military.com/NewsContent/0,13319,164257,00.html>> (12 April 2008)

<sup>38</sup> Paul Van Riper and Rober H. Scales, Jr., "Preparing for War in the 21st Century," Parameters, Autumn 1997, 8. <<http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/97autumn/scales.htm>> (7 December 2007)

<sup>39</sup> For more insight see Conway, "Center for a New American Security," and "Media Roundtable." Pentagon, Washington, D.C. 5 December 2007, 6. <<http://www.marines.mil/cmc/34cmc.nsf/speeches?readform>> (10 December 2007)

<sup>40</sup> Conway, "Media Roundtable."

<sup>41</sup> James T. Conway, Gary Roughead and Thad W. Allen, A Cooperative Strategy for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Seapower. Accessed 7 December 2007 <<http://www.navy.mil/maritime/>>

<sup>42</sup> Marine Corps Operating Concepts for a Changing Security Environment, 85.

<sup>43</sup> For more information, see Annex B Marine Corps Operating Concepts for a Changing Security Environment.

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<sup>44</sup> Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1 (MCDP 1): Warfighting (Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Quantico, VA, 20 June 1997).

<sup>45</sup> Marine Corps Emerging Operational Concepts: Ship-to-Objective Maneuver (STOM) (Marine Corps Combat Development Command, Quantico, VA, 25 July 1997).

<sup>46</sup> Distributed Operations (DO) is not a new concept and history is replete with examples of DO that used purposeful separations of units in order to influence a vast area of operations:

- In the 1939-1940 winter war against the Soviet Union, the Finns successfully employed widely distributed forces against less mobile Soviet columns, inflicting disproportionate casualties upon a numerically superior foe.
- In the China-Burma-India Theater during WWII, British and Indian “Chindits” employed long-range penetration tactics, in which numerous separated columns infiltrated the Japanese Army’s rear areas in dispersed fashion.
- In Vietnam, the U.S. Marines employed a rudimentary form of DO, known as the Combined Action Program (CAP). The CAP showed that separation and interdependence were effective within an operational framework designed for area stability and counterinsurgency.

For more information, see Annex D Marine Corps Operating Concepts for a Changing Security Environment.

<sup>47</sup> For complete description, see Echevarria II. “An American Way of War or Way of Battle.”

<sup>48</sup> Michael R. Melillo, “Outfitting a Big-War Military with Small-War Capabilities,” Parameters, Autumn 2006, 24. <<http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/06autumn/melillo.htm>> (11 December 2007)

<sup>49</sup> Williamson Murray and Robert H. Scales, Jr., The Iraq War (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2003), 255.

<sup>50</sup> MARADMIN 008/07 Accessed December 10, 2007  
<<http://www.marines.mil/almars/almar2000.nsf/52f4f5d11f10b4c4852569b8006a3e35/23954b943259c6168525727a00744719?OpenDocument>>

<sup>51</sup> Concepts and Programs 2007, Programs and Resources Department, Assessment and Acquisition Branch, HQMC (P&R, RPA), Pentagon, (Washington, D.C., 2007), 99.



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<sup>52</sup> For an in depth listing and description of all major and minor acquisitions in development and/or being fielded by the Marine Corps, see Parts 1-5 of Chapter 3 in Concepts and Programs 2007.

<sup>53</sup> United States Marine Corps. 12 December 2007. <<http://www.efv.usmc.mil/>>

<sup>54</sup> Conway, "Center for a New American Security." 11.

<sup>55</sup> BAE Systems. 12 December 2007. <[http://www.baesystemspresskit.com/ausa2007/M777A1\\_Lightweight\\_155mm\\_Howitzer.cfm](http://www.baesystemspresskit.com/ausa2007/M777A1_Lightweight_155mm_Howitzer.cfm)>

<sup>56</sup> See David Tucker, "Fighting Barbarians," *Parameters*, (Summer 1998): pp. 69-79; Martin van Creveld, "Costly Withdrawal Is the Price To Be Paid for a Foolish War," The Jewish Daily Forward, November 25, 2005 <http://www.forward.com/articles/costly-withdrawal-is-the-price-to-be-paid-for-a-fo/> (12 December 2007) and Robert M. Cassidy. Counterinsurgency and the Global War on Terror: Military Culture and Irregular War. (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006).

<sup>57</sup> Yochi J. Dreazen, "Criticizing the Petraeus Strategy," *The Wall Street Journal*, (7 April 2008): p. A4)

<sup>58</sup> Dr. Wray R. Johnson, [wray.Johnson@usmc.mil](mailto:wray.Johnson@usmc.mil) "Sine Wave Repeating," 7 April 2008, personal e-mail (7 April 2008).



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